

This is an Official Montana State **DPHHS HAN Info Service Message**

Distributed via the DPHHS Health Alert Network (HAN) System

Friday, September 30, 2005 9:50 hours (9:50 AM MDT)

This is an official **CDC Health Advisory**

Distributed via Health Alert Network

September 28, 2005, 19:25 EDT (07:25 PM EDT)

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Instructions for Identifying and Protecting Displaced Children

Rapid identification and protection of displaced children (less than 18 years) is imperative in order to reduce the potential for maltreatment, neglect, exploitation, and emotional injury. A critical aspect of pediatric disaster response is effectively addressing the needs of children who have been displaced from their families and legal guardians. The separation of children from significant others is a recognized factor influencing the psychological responses of children after a disaster.

Hurricane Katrina and the ensuing floods and chaos have caused over 3,000 children to be displaced throughout the United States. These children may be unaccompanied or accompanied by adults who are not their legal guardians. All medical clinics and shelters providing care to child survivors of natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina should immediately implement appropriate child-safety measures in direct response to this crisis. Initiatives such as "Operation Child ID" implemented in Camp Gruber Oklahoma have provided a rapid, systematic protocol for successfully identifying and protecting displaced children. CDC has reviewed this protocol and considers it to be a useful resource to share with its partners to promote a safer and healthier environment for displaced children in shelters:

Protocol to Rapidly Identify and Protect Displaced Children

- Survey all children in your shelter to identify children who are not with their legal guardians - these children have a high probability of being listed as missing by family members; find out where they are sleeping in the shelter; and the name and age of the person who is supervising them. A survey for identifying displaced child evacuees is available online at [<http://www.health.ok.gov/bt/>](http://www.health.ok.gov/bt/).
- Place a hospital-style identification bracelet (or a picture identification card, ideally) on the child and a matching one on the supervising adult(s). Check frequently to make sure that the wrist band matches that of the adult(s) seen with the child in the shelter.
- The names of all children identified through the survey as not being with their legal guardians should be considered at high-risk and immediately reported to the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-888-544-5475. The NCMEC can then cross-check them with the names of children who have been reported missing.
- After the "high risk" children have been reported, a complete list of children's names in the clinic or shelter should be sent to the NCMEC in case adults and/or children have provided incorrect information about their relationship and status.
- Children who are not with their legal guardians (i.e., prior to the hurricane) should undergo a safety and well-being assessment (taking into consideration an assessment of the relationship between the child and accompanying adult), ideally performed by a physician with pediatric experience.
- If NCMEC informs you that the child has been reported as missing, locate the child and facilitate reunification of the child and his/her legal guardian.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) 2005 [<http://www.missingkids.com/>](http://www.missingkids.com) NCMEC records children who are less than 21 years of age who have been reported missing or displaced

² The medical care at Camp Gruber is being provided through a partnership between the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and the Oklahoma Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

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The goal Montana's Health Alert Network is to transmit information to local public health authorities as quickly as possible, and assign a suitable priority to the message that is sensitive to the impact of a health-related event providing information of immediate utility relative to the public health and safety of Montanans. For questions or comments relative to Montana's HAN system you may contact the Montana State HAN Coordinator Jim Aspevig at <<mailto:jaspevig@mt.gov>> or the Associate HAN Coordinator Gerry Wheat at <<mailto:gwheat@mt.gov>>

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Info Service Message: provides general information regarding a situation or opportunity; does not typically require immediate action.

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